The Field in the World

THE BOUNDARY LINE OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY
AND FELLOWSHIP.

Matt. 13:38 The field is the world.

INTRO.

When we regard Jesus as a miracle-working God in human form we are not surprised at anything he says or does. He knows all things and has all power. ~~The sur-prise~~ But Jesus the man, of the race of conquered and despised Jews, reared in a humble home in the small town of Nazareth, permitted to assert hinself publically for only a few months and put to death shamefully by his own people, thus curtailing his influence to the narrowest range-Jesus the man fills us with utter astonishment over and over, in his attitudes and sayings.

The amazing thing about the parable of the wheat and the tares is that Jesus claims to have a message which is vital to the whole world and which needs the world for its perfect operation. "The field is the world." The sower is Jesus, the son of man, the seeds are his followers, and the harvest is the Kingdom of God on earth!

"The field is the world." None the less astonishing is the history of these words across the centuries. The world in which Jesus lived was the Roman Empire-Xty captured that world. Then came the barbarian invasions. Again the Xns took up the challenge. Columba, Ansgar, Boniface, Augustine, Patrick introduced ~~Xty~~ the Gospel to our forest fathers until all Europe was dotted with Xn institutions. The Mohammedan bloc of the ways of trade brot about a pause in expansion but when the New World was discovered by the explorers, the Gospel was carried to India and Japan.

Then came Protestantism and when it was well established it sent forth missionaries-Carey went to India, Livingstone to Africa, Judson to Burma, Paton to the New Hebrides, Morrison to China. The field of Protestantism was the world.

Another pause has come in our day. Millions of Protestants no lo ger feel the force of the old challenge. Criticism of the Missionary Enterprise has increased, enthusiasm has waned, resuurces have dwindled and the outward expansion of Xty has been caught in a lull.

This missionary pause is not without justification. 139 different foreign missionary boards, acting independently of each other- how absurd. What have the peculiarities of these sectarian denominations to do with the Gospel itself? Competition on the world field between denominations may well be criticised.

From another standpoint the world missionary enterprise will no longer command our whole-hearted support. We can no longer make a map of the world in black and white. America, England and a few European nations white with Xty and the rest of the world black with heathendom. The West with its imperialisms and militarisms and with is social and economic wrongs can no longer sing to the East,

"Can we, whose souls are lighted,
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?"

This whole bases of the missionary enterprise is gone. No wonder that Ghandi has said,"Why should you self-styled whites get it into your heads that Xty is your special Largesse to distribute and interpret? You have made a mess of it yourselves."

Thus, today, we criticise the narrowness of our denominational interests. But as we break away from mere denominationalism I am afraid we, in our more liberal outlook upon life, are losing sight of the Gospel's great dynamic power- the field is the world! Our liberalism has centered our interest on the local church itself, with no outlook beyond. Criticize the denominations in their narroness all you please, but you will have to admit that they have always regarded their field as the world! Centering interest merely on the local congregation is narrower than the old denominationalism. Let us this morning candidly face these five words of Jesus-The field is the world.

I. In the first place we should be eternally grateful ~~that~~ to those who have taken these five words seriously. The ancestors of many of us were of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic origin, primative barbarians in the forests of Briton. Listen to St.Jerome of the fourth century,"Why should I speak of other nations when I, myself, a youth on a visit to Gaul, heard that the Atticoti, a British tribe eat human flesh, and that altho they find herds of swine and droves of large and small cattle in the woods, it is their custon to cut off the buttocks of the shepherds and the breasts of their women, and to regard them as the greatest delacies?" These cannibals were among our ancestors in ancient Great Briton. Some of the finest things in our lives go back to Xns who could not keep their Xty within local bounds but went even to distant and barbarous Briton, saying,"The field is the world."

II. The world today has grown so unified and its parts have become so interdependent that we sell to the world the products of our natural resources and the output of our industries, we share with the world our scientific discoveries and educational advantages, we fellowship with the world in the fields of culture and in the news of the day, why should we not share with the world the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? We have given to the world so much of our evil propensities that we ought to feel obligated to atone for it by giving to the world our greatest freedom from all evil- the saving power of the Gospel. Having treated the world as we have, how can we leave the world alone in regards to our highest and best knowledge of God and man which comes to us thru Jesus?

III. When we localize our Xty we localize the spirit of Jesus.

There are some things about us that are merely peculiar to ourselves-customs and manners, i.e. But our scientific discoveries are not bound by national and racial lines. Red Cross activities are not limited to just the home folk. Some things we possess belong to (the world.

The question is .

In which class do we propose to put the spirit of Jesus? Is he and his religion merely one of our western localisms? But Jesus was an oriental. Not only so, but he broke free from his own nationalistic and racialistic religion to give to mankind a religion so profound in its faith, so universal in its ethical demands that anyone of any race or nationality could be his follower.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul, and thy neighbor as thyself"- what is there local about that? "Whatsoever ye would that others men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them." "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me"- what is local about that? Take any characteristic saying of the Master, such as the story of the prodigal son or of the Good Samaritan, it is always universal in its application How can any man who cares for Christ at all not want him to have a dominant influence in the world? Christ belongs to all mankind and cannot be made the monopolistic possession of any one race or nation.

IV. "The field is the world." Looking at these five words thru the eyes of Jesus, it ought to become evident that the local Xty of our Western churches needs to be reformed until it conforms to the spirit of Christ. Much of the local Xty of our Western churches is not fit to be propogated. Its denominationalism and ecclesiasticism and theology have about crushed the life out of Christ. No wonder Dwight L. Moody said, "If I thot I had one drop of sectarian blood in my veins, I would let it out before I went to bed; if I had one sectarian hair in my head, I would pull it out." The churches need the world for a background against which to see themselves in their true light. They must themselves be big enough for the world's needs-large, inclusive, catholic, universal, like Jesus.

The churches not only need the world as their field in which to labor, but as their occulist to keep their vision perfect. We need Xns like Kagawa, E. Stanley Jones, Schweitzer and others like them to point out to us that Jesus himself is the Good News and that his own unadulterated and unaltered message alone can meet the needs of the world. The world needs Xty, but first of all Xty needs the world to keep it curative in power and catholic in spirit.

V. Perhaps in our time more than in any other the five words of our text point out the need of an international, interracial Christian fellowship. Let us change the term, foreign missions, to International Xty.

We ought to thank God that Kagawa is a Xn. And as such he is not a foreigner. He is our brother in X. And even beyond the boundaries of our organized Xty, is'nt it worth while to have Jesus influence thinking men? Take Ghandi, for instance. Listen to him talk to the boys in his college in India: "I say to the 75% of Hindus receiving instruction in this college that your lives also will be incomplete unless you reverently study the teachings of Jesus..... The message of Jesus is contained in the Sermon on the Mount, unadulterated and taken as a whole...if then, I had to face only the sermon on the mount and my interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say, 'Oh yes, I am a Christian." Is'nt that worth while?

5. After weighing all the criticisms of the missionary enterprise and after studying the latest statistical reports of the churches, I have reached the following conclusions:

1. The pause of the present time is more in the minds of the critics than of the churches. The depression did reduce the giving but already the yearly offerings have increased and the work is being carried on just same.

2. The major Protestant churches are co-operating in ever increasing measure, not to set up merely denominational churches but to establish national churches of Christ in the countries of the world. See report.

3. The movement towards union among the protestant churches is is being accelerated. Witness the Edinburgh and Oxford Conferences of last July. The churches are getting together and are facing the world situations and the world's needs as never before. The day of denominational emphasis is waning and Xty in the sole light of Jesus Christ is rising.

4. This year we celebrate 100 years of foreign missionary enterprise. Its history is not only a thriller, but its achievements are amazing. Go to how many lands today and ask, "Who first brot in scientific medicine?" The missionaries. "Who first brot in scientific agriculture?" The missionaries. "Who first reduced the spoken language to writing so there could be books and records?" the missionaries. Who first established schools and colleges?" The missionaries. "Who first lifted savagery to civilized government?" the missionaries.

I predict that the second 100 years will bring forth an international Xty that will influence the world and head it towards the Kingdom of God far in advance of the first 100 years achievement.

5. I feel keenly that we of this local Community Church have been leaving something out of our Xty. Think of it- we are leaving out the map of the world! We barely support the local church. We have largely withdrawn from the world field. Let us try to get back to Christ- the field is the world!